



File Code: 1950-3

Date: October 23, 2007

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Ravalli County Commissioners

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Dear Interested Citizen:

I wanted to let you know of recent changes to the Trapper Bunkhouse Land Stewardship project.

During the summer of 2007 the Tin Cup Fire burned approximately 587 acres (438 acres of National Forest, 68 acres of private and 81 acres of State Land). A portion of this fire, approximately 146 acres, burned within the proposed treatment Unit 26 (See Map).

In the April 2007 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Trapper Bunkhouse Land Stewardship project Unit 26 was analyzed in Alternative 2 for 189 acre of commercial thinning using skyline & ground based yarding. The DEIS Alternative map showed approximately 2.8 miles of existing roads in Unit 26.

The roads depicted in this unit in the DEIS were an error; there is no existing road access. We recently have secured permission to cross private land to access this area. The proposed changes to manage this area include the construction of approximately 1.9 miles of temporary road to commercially thin approximately 123 acres (65% of the unit) and salvage timber on approximately 66 acres (35% of the unit) (Map 2). Both ground based and skyline yarding would be used. Approximately 75 acres of the moderate to high severity burned area in Unit 26 would be planted with ponderosa pine. The percentage of the unit that will be salvaged may increase if additional mortality occurs resulting from bark beetle infestation. The temporary road would be rehabilitated following use. Rehabilitation would include recontouring, slashing, and seeding to restore soil productivity and reduce the spread of weeds. Within Unit 26 displacement of fire created ash and burned organic horizons are the primary concern with ground based yarding. In order to protect against erosion and maintain soil productivity, any areas where mineral soils are exposed by tractor yarding will be mulched following operations. Mulching will be completed using either fine wood fiber, straw mulch, or an equivalent material. The mulch will provide full ground cover that will protect against erosion and provide safe sites for seed germination and establishment. Another method, determined to be equally or more effective in meeting the mitigation objective could be used. The other mitigation and project design measures described in the DEIS would apply (DEIS, p. 2-26 to 2-30).

Salvaging fire killed trees is consistent with the "provide forest products" portion of the purpose and need for this project. In the DEIS we included capturing economic value of insect and disease killed trees. We will add fire killed trees to this objective.



The interdisciplinary team has considered these changes and have assessed that they would be consistent with applicable laws and the 1987 Forest Plan, including the amendments described in the DEIS.

If you would like to comment on these changes please do so in any of the following manners by **November 9, 2007** for our consideration in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. We anticipate releasing the final this winter.

Send Comments to: Trapper Bunkhouse – Comments
Forest Supervisor's Office
Bitterroot National Forest
1801 N. First
Hamilton, MT 59840-3114

Email to: comments-northern-bitterroot@fs.fed.us

Electronic comments must be in Microsoft Word, ASCII text, HTML, Rich Text, or PDF format and must state: "Trapper Bunkhouse – Comments" in the email subject line

If you have any questions, please contact me at the Darby Ranger Station, (406) 821- 3913.

Sincerely,


CHARLES T. OLIVER
Darby District Ranger

enclosure

Tin Cup 2007 Fire Perimeter and Trapper-Bunkhouse Treatment Unit 26

Legend

- Treatment Unit
- Tin Cup 2007 Fire Perimeter
- Temporary Road

UNIT 26

